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INFO RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY 5538
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 1685
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ APR 9776
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 0500
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL PRIORITY 0254
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [EC](#)
SUBJECT: INDIGENOUS PROTESTS DIVERTED, TEMPORARILY

REF: QUITO 817

11. (SBU) Summary: The GOE has actively blocked indigenous protesters from marching in provinces under a state of emergency declaration, arresting leaders and preventing concerted movement of protesters to the capital. FENOCIN, the indigenous campesino group, announced 7,000 protesters will converge on the capital by April 5-6. As of early April 5, less than 100 had arrived. The larger indigenous organization, CONAIE, continues to threaten nationwide disturbances, reportedly set for mid-April unless the GOE agrees to put the FTA to referendum. Potential effects of the protests on GOE stability will be described SepTel. End Summary.

Old Arrests, New Arrests

12. (U) On April 3, authorities released FENOCIN leader Pedro de la Cruz, from custody in Canar province. He had been held since March 31 for violating provisions against assembly under the state of emergency by attempting to march with 150 anti-FTA protesters toward Quito. Also on April 3, police in Imbabura province, also under state of emergency rules, arrested leaders of another FENOCIN group of approximately 200 attempting to march toward Quito from the north. On April 4, police detained FEINE leader Marco Murillo and 11 others leading a march of 350 towards Quito from Cotopaxi province.

13. (U) On April 4, FENOCIN leaders declared their intention to continue their efforts to congregate up to 7,000 protesters in the capital on April 5. Few of those protesters had arrived by early April 5.

CONAIE Threatening Nationwide Protests

14. (U) In a March 31 assembly meeting of several hundred CONAIE leaders in Salasaca (Ref A), CONAIE leaders reportedly decided to initiate new nationwide protests after the Holy Week holidays, beginning the week of April 16. Later, the group added a new demand, calling for GOE respect for the hydrocarbon law passed March 30.

GOE Actions

15. (U) On April 3, Government minister Felipe Vega publicly characterized prospective protests as having electoral motives and involving a minority of the indigenous population. He also accused CONAIE leader Luis Macas of

causing serious economic damage to the country.

¶16. (U) Defense Minister Oswaldo Jarrin told the press on April 4 that the armed forces would enforce state of emergency measures, including limitations on freedom of assembly, in the 5 provinces affected (Canar, Imbabura, Chimborazo, Cotopaxi) and parts of Pichincha. (Note: Quito, the capital of Pichincha province, is not under emergency restrictions.) Jarrin emphasized that the emergency decree protects the right of the majority from disruptions by a lawless minority.

Quito Relatively Quiet, Blockages Expected in Provinces

¶17. (U) As of early April 5, Quito remained calm, with the number of protesters present in the gathering point of Arbolito park numbering in less than one hundred. Organizers declared the bulk of the protesters would arrive on April 6 for a national assembly on the FTA to be held in the park. Students at Quito's Central University were also reportedly organizing anti-FTA activities early on April 5. Police expect new road blockages by protesters in Cotopaxi and Imbabura provinces.

Comment

¶18. (U) Unprecedented preventive measures implemented by police and the military in the state of emergency zone have hampered FENOCIN and FEINE marchers, delaying and possibly crippling this week's protests in the capital. As a result, the bulk of these protesters are now expected to shift their focus from the capital to blocking roads in their provinces. With most of the provincial demands which underpinned the earlier wave of indigenous mobilization resolved, and with Holy Week beginning on April 8, widespread anti-FTA protests are not likely to start in earnest until the week of April 16. CONAIE's addition of the hydrocarbon law to its list of demands is a negative development, and could affect Palacio's willingness to reverse this disastrous law.

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